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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 14 July 2014 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to you to reiterate our urgent appeal that all possible measures be taken by the international community to provide immediate protection to the Palestinian civilian population throughout the entire Occupied State of Palestine, especially in the besieged Gaza Strip, against the ongoing savagery and military aggression being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power. The numbers and facts surrounding Israel's latest war crimes and acts of State terrorism against the Palestinian people are beyond alarming.

In this regard, since 7 July 2014, Israel, the occupying Power, has brutally killed at least 184 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip alone; more than 70 have been killed in the period since my last letter to you, dated 11 July, and since the clear call by the Security Council on 12 July for a ceasefire and for respect of international humanitarian law, including through the protection of civilians. Reports indicate that, of the Palestinians brutally murdered by the occupying forces, 39 were children, 24 were women, 13 were elderly persons and 3 were disabled persons. The occupying Power has also caused deliberate and serious injury to more than 1,300 Palestinians, including hundreds of children and women, many suffering permanent injury and many in critical condition and struggling to live. Relevant institutions are also reporting that at least 25,000 Palestinian children are in need of immediate psychosocial support owing to the horrors and tragedies they have witnessed over the past week. The grave violations of human rights instruments by Israel, the occupying Power, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Israel is a signatory, are too numerous to list in this letter.

The Israeli assaults are also causing vast physical destruction, as the occupying forces have destroyed or caused serious damage to 940 civilian homes, rendering thousands permanently homeless. Schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), health

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centres, mosques, water and sewage networks, electricity lines and industries have also been targeted by the occupying Power, resulting in two hospitals, three medical clinics, one treatment centre for the disabled, four ambulances and 62 schools damaged by Israeli airstrikes and three mosques completely destroyed. More than 160,000 people have already been displaced, many of whom are seeking safety and shelter in UNRWA schools, and 395,000 people have been affected by the destruction of water and waste infrastructure, gravely compounding the humanitarian crisis and suffering being endured by the Palestinian civilian population.

These figures are widely reflected in the reports of, among others, the agencies of the United Nations, the same organization that Israel, the occupying Power, is a full member of and whose Charter and resolutions it is duty-bound to ensure respect of. Yet, the reality is that Israel acts with complete, systematic and wilful disrespect for the Charter and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, committing human rights violations and war crimes against the Palestinian people under its occupation with total impunity and barbarism. The historic lack of accountability has no doubt fostered Israel's belief that it is above the law and will suffer no consequences for such crimes. This immoral, unconscionable situation cannot continue. The international community can no longer stand by while the occupying Power commits grave breaches of international law, including humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, and human rights law, inflicting trauma, terror, death and destruction on the defenceless Palestinian people. For all of the grave breaches of international law, including war crimes, that it is perpetrating, Israel must be fully held accountable.

Moreover, we underscore the international legal obligation to ensure the protection of civilians, for this obligation has not only been abdicated by Israel, the occupying Power, but is being intentionally, grossly and systematically violated as it continues its military attacks and excessive use of force against unarmed, defenceless civilians throughout the cities, towns and refugee camps of Occupied Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip, exhibiting a cruel disregard for human life and inflicting civilian casualties and widespread suffering, pain and trauma among the Palestinian people.

Rejecting international appeals for a ceasefire, the occupying Power is in fact widening the scope of its attacks, even including a ground invasion into northern Gaza over the weekend. In an act that is clearly a war crime, yesterday, 13 July, 18 members of the Al-Batsh family, including six children and three women, one of them pregnant, were massacred, and 16 other civilians were wounded by the Israeli occupying forces in a deliberately launched military airstrike at a home in the neighbourhood of Tuffah in the Gaza Strip. This gruesome attack, which Israel declared to be targeting Tayseer Al-Batsh, a police chief in Gaza, caused the deaths of Nahed Nai'im Al-Batsh (41), Bahaa Majed Al-Batsh (28), Qusai Issam Al-Batsh (12), Mohammed Issam Al-Batsh (17), Ahmed Nu'man Al-Batsh (27), Yehya Ala Al-Batsh (18), Jalal Majed Al-Batsh (26), Mahmoud Majed Al-Batsh (22), Marwa Majed Al-Batsh (25), Majed Subhi Al-Batsh, Khaled Majed Al-Batsh (20), Ibrahim Majed Al-Batsh (18), Manar Majed Al-Batsh (13), Amal Hasan Al-Batsh (49), Anas Alaa Al-Batsh (10), Qusai Alaa Al-Batsh (20), Zakariya Alaa Al-Batsh and Aziza Youssef Al-Batsh (59).

In another war crime, on Saturday, 12 July 2014, an Israeli airstrike killed two Palestinians in a centre for disabled persons in northern Gaza and seriously

wounded several others. Among the dead were Ola Washahi (31) and Suha Abu Saada (47), both of whom suffered from severe mental and physical handicaps. This war crime was also perpetrated in direct contravention of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Israel is also a signatory. Moreover, these aforementioned attacks are only two of the hundreds of lethal, indiscriminate attacks launched by Israel in recent days against the 1.8 million Palestinian civilians in Gaza, who are imprisoned there by the occupying Power, with nowhere to flee or seek refuge, with the exception of UNRWA schools, which have clearly not been spared as targets of attacks, and are once again living a nightmare inside a nightmare.

At the same time, in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the occupying Power continues its aggression against the civilian population. Measures of collective punishment, such as violent military raids into Palestinian towns and villages and the mass arrest and detention of Palestinian civilians, many of them youth as well as members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, continue unabated. The use of excessive force against the Palestinian civilian population, including Palestinians protesting against Israel's cold-blooded slaughter of their brothers and sisters in the Gaza Strip, also continues unabated. Israeli occupying forces continue to routinely fire stun grenades, tear gas canisters, rubber-coated steel bullets and even live ammunition at civilian protesters, causing dozens of injuries and causing today the death of Mounir Al-Badarin (21) in Al-Khalil (Hebron).

We call upon the international community to act immediately to end this latest barbaric aggression by Israel against the Palestinian civilian population throughout Occupied Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip. The statement issued by the Security Council on Saturday has clearly failed to compel the occupying Power to halt its military attacks and respond to the calls for a ceasefire. More serious collective action is required, including by the Security Council, to demand a halt to Israel's military operations and to protect civilian lives. Moreover, we call for the international community to ensure an end to Israel's eight-year illegal blockade against the people of Gaza, which has only further exacerbated their misery and suffering. Israeli violations must be condemned and the occupying Power must be held accountable for its continuous aggression. To remain silent in the face of such grave breaches of international law is unacceptable and will only bolster Israel's impunity and allow for the further loss of innocent human life.

Here, I wish to refer to the clear calls for international action and efforts to uphold international legal obligations by the Palestinian leadership, along with the League of Arab States. The Palestinian leadership is continuously conducting meetings aimed at addressing this growing crisis and has taken several steps with the primary objective of ending Israel's bloodshed and war against Palestinian civilians in Gaza and securing international protection of the Palestinian people in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention. As I write this letter to you, a meeting of Arab ministers of foreign affairs is being held in Cairo to discuss further possible action, including the holding of an emergency meeting of the Security Council to mobilize action on a draft resolution which would call for, inter alia: an immediate ceasefire; provisions to ensure protection for Palestinian civilians in all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as Israel, the occupying Power, has clearly abdicated and gravely breached its responsibilities to ensure the safety and well-being of the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation;

and an investigation of all grave breaches committed by the occupying Power, including the abduction and burning alive of Mohammed Abu Khdier by the occupying Power's illegal terrorist settlers. Moreover, the State of Palestine has called upon the depository of the Geneva Conventions to convene the High Contracting Parties to ensure respect for the Fourth Geneva Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to take measures to provide protection to the Palestinian people living under Israel's cruel and belligerent 47-year military occupation.

This letter is in follow-up to our 506 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 11 July 2014 (A/ES-10/639-S/2014/489) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations